

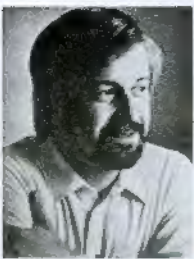
MINSK *economic* NEWS

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Govt go red without reddening

Hot dogs and cool crowds



By Mikhail VOLODIN,
Editor-in-Chief

As it was aptly said a while ago the Belarusian policy is made in Moscow. So let us start our conversation with Russia. The present Russian Duma (a representative assembly) is all the worse than the SuS dissolved last October. One of the reasons is that the romance-lovers of the old convocation are no longer eager to be engaged in political games. There are just professionals left (it is generally good, but not in this country). Regardless of their party affiliation the overwhelming majority of these professionals are inveterate scoundrels (such is an old Russian custom).

The outcome of the Russian elections has completely smashed the hope that Russia will go without dictatorship. The first step taken by the deputies - to grant amnesty to the coup leaders of 1991 and 1993 - has provided a body of evidence to the developments. The Russian political story of the last few years reminds us of a shooting contest with the shots aimed at the adversaries rather than the target. It cannot go on forever. Somebody, be it democrats, communists or fascists, must take away the fire arms and introduce their austere rules of the game, or the country will go to a civil war.

Belarus has a large edge over Russia in regards to the domestic opposition and the danger of a conflict explosion. There has been no stiff opposition as yet. The practically abortive nation-wide political strike in February has explicitly proved this statement. The strike has shown that there is a clear-cut disproportion between an economic and social crisis. The economy has collapsed, the industry has come to a standstill but it looks like the people are not in great distress as the press plays it up. The Belarusian nation is in an enthusiastic search for its daily bread and has totally ceased to take any interest in the politics. I think an action staged by the beer lover party (yes, there is such a party) was the most interesting event at the first leg of the strike.

The hot dogs (the cover photo) have already entered the history of the Belarusian democratic movement. Unlike regular ones these hot dogs were not heartily eaten up over a family lunch. They were first arrested and then hurled

to the wicked police dogs. The guilt was that they were bought in the amount of 100 kg by "the beer lovers" to give away to the strike supporters exposed to freezing cold in Independence Square. The power authorities considered this action as a vivid back-up of the rebels.

Following a legal action to restore order the police detained the hot dogs as well as those who handed them to the people in need. The "beer lovers" were charged with the violation of trade regulations. The truck which had delivered the hot dogs was waylaid by the police too, due to "an illegal parking". Two salesladies who had sold the hot dogs to the "lovers" also got involved. They were accused of selling more hot dogs than the restrictions allow.

Thus, a regular staple food has stirred up quite a commotion. At times it looks to me as though we live in a country of fools.

This is one of routine events which took place in February worth my remembering. One businessman, a friend of mine, who runs a cafe was, billed BRB 5 mln for the heating. The cafe was on the verge of ruin. The owner sent a letter to the TEPLOSET, an organization which is in charge of heating, requesting the cafe heating be cut off. On the next day a heating attendant showed up. He tightened up the valve and put a seal on it. One hour after it was not possible to work in the cafe. Everybody was sweating all over and the temperature reached 35°C (95°F). The attendant did his business: he was done but the valve was loosened as far as it would go and, of course, the seal prevented the cafe staff from reducing a free heating flow. In my understanding this attendant somehow bears a strong resemblance to our Government. Obviously, the authorities have taken the decision to openly "tighten up the valve".

There is only one hope left. The professionalism of the Belarusian power authorities are on a par with the skills possessed by the TEPLOSET attendants. Perhaps, they will mix up right and left?

At the same time the chances may be too slim provided the same Russian "professionals" succeed our political "amateurs" at the ensuing elections.



Sergey GRITS

New partisan aiming

By Yuri DRAKOKHRUST

One month has slipped by since the Belarusian parliament voted for the resignation of its Chairman Mr. Stanislav Shushkevich. The resignation was, actually, a natural outcome of the progress made by the Belarusian society and, in particular, the ruling elite. But, anyway, shortly after the dismissal of Mr. Shushkevich, new and quite ominous tendencies took root in the political life of the country.

In a certain sense, the harmony between words and actions has set in for the rulers of Belarus. Addressing the leaders of local Soviets premier Mr. Vyacheslav Kebich has said: "We will be in command of mass media". While speaking in favour of the presidency in the country the premier was quoted as giving an absolutely destructive argument. "We virtually had the president - the first secretary of the Communist Party", he said. For his part, a new leader of the Parliament Mr. Myachaslav Gryb addressed the trade union meeting and said: "We will not be building capitalism". To specify this statement the speaker added that Belarus shouldn't haste to privatize large enterprises. The Russian experience in this direction looked very debatable to him. The examples of similar "lexical" coinages made last month can be multiplied. But the point is not in a number of these expressions. The bottomline is that the Belarusian state power has finally come to speak its immanent tongue. At first sight Mr. Shushkevich without really hampering the powerful functions of the former nomenklatura was doing a useful job while providing the regime with a democratic image both in the country and abroad. But this sight appears to be superficial. Ideological reasoning is as important as personal contacts and it is extremely crucial for the monolithic character of the ruling elite a la Sovietique. The aiming has always been a pivot of the party policy. Mr. Shushkevich used a fresh communist lingo and his democratic reasoning totally bewildered the cadre. Now the cadre is getting the true aiming and putting it into practice.

I was told by some businessmen friends of mine that presently after Mr. Gryb had made his statements they started having problems at the State Property Committee with the privatization papers for one large factory.

Please see,
Signs of rebolshevization
page 2

Euphoria in climax



In his financial report Alexander BURDA speculates on a monetary union between Russia and Belarus. Even if it does not happen we are already on a damage recovery

A frantic anticipation of the impending union with the great and powerful Russian rouble was as in January the major hard currency market tendency in February.

The long-suffering Belarusian economy has repeatedly been tormented by rumours, anticipation and contradictory official statements. The question is still the same: are the "Russians" (roubles, sure enough) finally "coming"? It must be mentioned that the official representatives of Belarus are feeling euphorically upbeat about

the future. In their thinking the imminent RUR "doomsday" will automatically deprive us of all our misfortunes. The Russian side would rather prefer to keep silent and give evasive answers: well, it is a good idea but we need to touch base on a couple of issues. The press in both states is on the alert or, I should say, sceptical. Most economists reckon that a monetary unification spells an uphill task and, surely, it will not be a panacea for the Belarusian economy. A defla-

tion shock is predicted in case the "rabbits" are converted into the Russian roubles at the exchange rate lower than that of the currency market. This will also entail a competitive drop in the Belarusian commodities, a break in the current commodity and cash flows as well as an aggravation of the unemployment and some other social problems in Belarus.

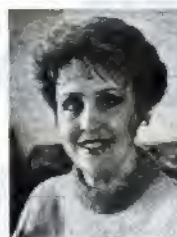
The economic advisers to the Russian Government (they are known to be three heads above their Belarusian counterparts) outline 3 stages of the post-unification period: euphoria, catastrophe and collapse.

The experts schedule the "rabbit" - hard rouble exchange euphoria for the first 1-2 months and the ensuing less pleasant stages for 3-6 months.

Please see,
Gains dim, evils evident
page 3

MM privatization: pros and cons

He who owns the mass media owns the power. We all know whom the power in Belarus belongs to. Sociologist **Nadezhda EFIMOVA** tells the readers about the owner of the mass media.



According to the Information Ministry there are the following registered founders of printing publications in the Republic of Belarus (see Table 1)

It will suffice to compare the numbers and see that no drastic changes have occurred in the structure of publications over the last year. The majority of the newspapers have remained state-owned. They have belonged and still belong to the power institutions (including the Soviets of People's Deputies), state-run enterprises and organizations. The press of religious and public organizations as well as publications founded by the editorial office groups and private citizens have the lowest share in the aggregate printing production. Furthermore, the three latter types of publications have been quantitatively cut compared to others over the same period.

Hence, it appears that the problem of mass communication privatization as well as the expansion and consolidation of non-state mass media is quite tangible now. Keeping this issue in mind, an expert survey has been carried out to get the opinion from directors of mass media, civil servants and entrepreneurs who deal with information business. Here is a breakdown of answers furnished by respondents when asked for their assessment of different privatization options in Belarus (see Table 2).

The above-mentioned figures indicate that privatization termed as a process of setting up non-state mass media parallel to existing state-run ones has gained more adherents than privatization seen as a handing over of state ownership to private citizens. Those who could be interested in the second option simply do not believe in its feasibility.

The majority of experts believe that no matter how mass media privatization proceeds the state should not shy away from backing up the press, radio and TV in this crisis period.

One of the possible ways for mass media protection is by obtaining a full or partial tax exemption. But which publications must be granted tax discounts? The panel of experts has voiced their opinion in the following way:

Belarusian language and national identity publications 63%
Children and youth publications 27%

All mass media (including private ones) which have started their activities but still have weak funding 22%

Mass media of groups which do not have ample protection, for instance, invalids 13%

State mass media 11%

Mass media which promote national culture and ethical morals 9%

The tax burden is now the heaviest burden all the mass media have to bear. This makes any state aid hypocritical. With one hand the state allegedly provides the mass media with the funds and with the other hand it employs its taxation mechanism and, therefore, takes away the money. The tendency is that the funds allocated for the mass media are on the wane while the money taken away is on the rise.

The mass media system of Belarus is now on the brink of collapse but none of the mechanisms capable of making the situation different have been tested as yet. It takes much more than just financial resources. It is necessary to change the state's concept of mass media and start considering the latter a social and cultural value rather than a willful and dangerous "genie from the bottle".

The opinion survey has been carried out at the Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies in conjunction with the Centre for International Private Enterprise (CIPE, USA).

Table 1

	1993	1994
Supreme Soviet, Council of Ministers, ministries and institutions	43 publications	45 publications
Soviets of People's Deputies	138	137
State-run enterprises, organizations	122	119
Associations, firms, small businesses, stock companies	121	123
Editorial office groups	58	51
Private citizens	84	71
Public organizations	81	75
Religious organizations	11	14
Others	12	6

Table 2

	Civil servants	Mass media directors	Business people
Privatization as a tool for setting up non-state mass media in parallel to the state-run ones:			
- negative or sceptical approach	35%	22%	-
- positive approach	65%	78%	100%
Setting up a non-state system of mass media dissemination in parallel to the state one:			
- negative or sceptical approach	10%	-	-
- positive approach	90%	100%	100%
Mass media privatization as a tool for handing state ownership over to private citizens:			
- negative or sceptical approach	47%	28%	54%
- positive approach	53%	72%	46%
Handing a state-run system of mass media dissemination over to the private one:			
- negative or sceptical approach	33%	20%	41%
- positive approach	67%	80%	59%

Signs of rebolshevization

Continued from page 1

As far as the mass media is concerned the freedom of speech was not in excess before: the bulk of big nationwide newspapers was founded by the CoM. However, in this sphere the premier's direction was put into practice too. "Svaboda", an opposition paper, was suspended for one day. "Belaruskaya Maladzhnaya" radio programme wasn't on the air for two days. Some capital and provincial democratic newspapers lost legal actions to the high-ranking officials. But the best visual demonstration of the mass media control manifested itself during the run-up to a political strike of February 15. The mass media worked as a well-organized mechanism which stigmatized the "national-extremists", gave the floor to Ivan Antonovich, a former leader of the Russian Communist Party, and Mr. Sergey Gaidukovich, a local leader of the pro-communist Popular Movement of Belarus. Several days prior to the strike the premier openly gave the directions to the directors of the Belarusian Confederation of Manufacturers and Entrepreneurs to appear on television and brand the strike committee with infamy. The Trade Union Federation of Belarus, an official body which stands up for the workers' rights, scrambled onto the bandwagon. After the meetings staged on February 15 the Belarusian Themis made the initiators responsible for the events.

New trends were revealed in the cadre appointments. General Anatoly Novikov was made Chairman of the Parliamentary Commission on National Security. In August 1991 Mr. Novikov being the head of the Political Department of the Belarusian Army District vigorously supported the Coup Committee. The CoM approved a new position - press-secretary to the premier. Colonel Vladimir Zametatin whose thinking is very close to that of the Popular

Movement of Belarus was given this appointment. Some other appointments are imminent. It is assumed that Police Lieutenant-Colonel Sergey Davidovich will be chosen as Chairman of the Supreme Soviet Commission on Publicity and Human Rights. To all appearances, the Parliamentary majority is going to make the editor-in-chief of "Narodnaya Hazeta" newspaper renounce his position. Mr. Nikolai Zenkovich who is notorious for his conservative outlook is likely to gain the upper hand.

A patent world public opinion ignorance can be easily seen in the republic. The speeches delivered by the Deputies majority as well as the Government press, often have anti-American and anti-Western faint notes. The relations with Russia are still a key concept in the exterior policy. However, the Belarusian developments frequently play the role of indicators which are ahead of the Russian events. The demonstrative re-communization of Belarus would never happen if it wasn't for the revenge taken by the Russian anti-reformatory forces. Premier Kebich says that even after the currency unification Belarus will not pursue the Russian economic policy. Most likely this statement signifies high hopes on the revision of the Russian reform policy.

And there was good reason for these firm hopes as the recent events showed. However, the conclusion of a monetary union with Russia is delayed. And it is not the fault of the Belarusian side. Premier Kebich has linked his political career with this action. This is why the union delay is nervously perceived by the CoM. A large-scale and aggressive anti-strike campaign partly accounts for the fear that Russia may change its mind to unite the currency with the country which is seized by serious anti-Government demonstrations. If the



New words, new people, new political deal. Is this true? As they say, everything new is really just the well forgotten old. **Yuri DRAKOKHRUST** gives a detailed analysis of the political events in Belarus.

unification does not happen, the Premier's posture will be badly undermined though, apparently, it is not going to be a catastrophe. The pro-Government parliamentary majority is not likely to seriously undertake any steps in order to forfeit the leader and benefactor. In the meantime the majority is working hard on the consolidation of his power by pushing a new Constitution. The basic law makes a provision for quite a strong presidency. The state power system laid down in the Constitution has been constructed by the ad hoc Committee in imitation President Vyacheslav Kebich. 2-year promises made by the Parliament to hold Parliamentary elections this spring have been sunk into oblivion. At present they are planning to adopt the Constitution and then to run presidency elections in summer. The Parliamentary elections are scheduled for the autumn. The Government still enjoys the monopoly on the mass media and the administrative machinery to be on an election team. In this environment Mr. Kebich's changes are too high.

True, a serious competition can be provided not only by the former speaker Mr. Shushkevich. It may come from Mr. Alexander Lukashenko, a bright populist politician who is the original Frankenstein begotten by the pro-Government Parliamentary majority. Mr. Lukashenko played a crucial role in overthrowing Mr. Shushkevich. His report on corruption made a public outcry

and won the sympathy of the people. He became one of the most popular politicians in the country overnight and now has nothing against playing a game which is called "President". The dauntless corruption-fighter has rallied up an ardent support from the communists and their allies. Thus, Mr. Lukashenko has a numerous team ready for the elections. For all this he is going to struggle with Mr. Kebich for practically the same electorate.

Some politicians hold that Mr. Kebich, fearing the elections will convince the Supreme Soviet to elect the first president at the session. In this case he will be definitely second to nobody. However, these are just vain apprehensions. Mr. Kebich needs new legitimacy rather than a new and broader latitude. The present Parliament is living the rest of its days. The mandate issued by the people is far more reliable and long-lived. Mr. Kebich somehow hopes that the backing of the society ruling elite will clinch his success during the elections. There is an assumption that the would-be Parliament is going to be an extreme Parliament made up of the orthodox communists and the Popular Front radicals. Anyway, both of them advocate an overhaul of the existing ownership division. And Mr. Kebich is the only viable force which can come to rescue the former party nomenclatura from this "riff-raff".

In a word, the political life of Belarus has a lot of tints. And it is a pity that all of them are deep red.

Is 500 T.V. channels possible?

Robert BAYNE dwells on TV prospects in Minsk. The author is far from being a theorist. He is the Chairman of the Board of Directors of New Television Technologies company, which is now investing into this project.



For better or for worse, the new age of communication is upon us. Nowhere will this be more apparent than the T.V. in your living room. The T.V. is evolving into a whole new transmission system. The world is getting smaller as more and more people are plugging into informational and communication networks, such as cable and wireless (satellite) T.V.

In America, cable T.V. was invented even before the color television, in the early 1950's. During the past 35 years, U.S. cable companies have been constructing high capacity broadband coaxial cable systems that now reach 96% of U.S. television households. Today, there are more than 11,000 T.V. cable companies in operation. They have the capacity to offer between 36 - 54 channels. This was a tremendous change when the service first appeared. Before, most people only had 4 or 5 channels.

Laying and installing cable for T.V. can be expensive and time consuming in some regions. As of a few years ago, wireless T.V. systems have starting competing with cable

systems. Instead of cable, this system uses satellite receive dishes at the main location and the roofs of the customer. It is a basic over the air broadcast operation like the regular T.V. stations, but can offer more programming from around the world. Wireless T.V. has proved very popular in international marketplaces where the cable infrastructure is still under development. It can expose many more people to the service in a shorter time.

All of the above has several implications for the city of Minsk. New Television Technologies, a joint venture between Minsk City Cable T.V. and an American group, has already conducted a lengthy feasibility study to introduce wireless T.V. in Minsk. This will be the first part of a development plan which has several phases.

In this new age of communications, a so called "media revolution" is taking place in America. All of these high capacity wires which reach into most homes can do more than just carry T.V. signals. They can carry any elec-

tronic signal, including telecommunications, fax, electronic mail from personal computers, even send out a fire alarm signal to the fire station indicating the source of fire.

The Minsk Mayor's office is aware of these events. It has formed an important commission to look at ways to develop this communications infrastructure using the cable T.V. network in Minsk. The New Television Technologies (N.T.T.) Company is bringing in specialists, including highly trained people from Daniels & Associates. Executives from the CNN news station are flying to Minsk to meet with Minsk City Cable and N.T.T.

A new technology called digital compression will be on the market soon. It can compress more than 10 channels into the frequency used normally by one channel. This means that if your T.V. set receives 10 channels, you could now receive 100. With a converter in the T.V. which can give you more than 50 normal channels, that means you could get 500 channels with digital compression. Even the Americans are scratching their heads about that. The press calls it "channel surfing". Where will all the programming come from? One positive aspect is that it would open up plenty of channel space for more educational programs on any topic such as language classes, cooking, car repair, self-defence, or even regular university classes for those who cannot attend in person.

Regardless of how many channels open up, the result in Minsk will be that families have a broader choice of higher quality programming for their home entertainment and education.

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February press review

If the Board dare to put **Leonid SHCHUKIN's** press review in full, it would cover almost all the paper. Only Minsk Digest, MEN Supplement, subscribers will get a complete text of the article



Introduction

The tedious nature of the February press is not due to dull life, but because of the concentration of the people around several painful key points, which can be expressed as follows: Russia - Constitution - President. For different layers of our compatriots the words can be transformed into other triangles, more crucial to them, for instance, workers and industrialists: Job - Order - Self-Respect; intellectuals: Mother tongue - Freedom - Clever government; or businessmen: Market - Land ownership - Business protection.

The concentrated estimate of February events may be found in Mr. Alexander Sosnov's, people's deputy, interview /1/ with which we want to start our review.

Ex-speaker - Prime minister

The former speaker, Mr. Shushkevich, has been given much attention to in the February press /2, 3, 4, 5, 6/.

Stressing his weaknesses, drawbacks and faults as a professional politician, nobody ever said an ill word of him as a man and a citizen. While early in February many of the observers put an end to him as a political figure, later on, after his voyages over the country and reappearance in Parliament many spoke of his return and even about a new "take-off" /7/.

Mr. Kebich's interview to Radio Liberty's reporters, published in the NH in the Belarusian language was a good step /9/, well-prepared by his crew.

Politics: changing colours

The two attempts to launch the nation-wide strike showed the objectiveness of paper observers (estimates of participants ranged from 3 thousand in SB to 30 thousand in S showing a broadly adjustable "focal ratio"), while other key events grouped political parties and move-

ments into two main blocks: those belonging to People's Movement of Belarus (Belaya Rus Slavic Sobor /16/, PBC /17/, MDSPJ/18/, BCSP, APB /19/) and those who consider that the "creeping" communist coup took place (BPF /20/, UDFB, BZV, BSDH /21/, BChDU /22/, FTU /23/, SBL, PPB /24/, NDPB /25/, PAP /26/).

Views expressed by papers were so concentrated that we dare to range them in our MEN selection from "left" to "right" (or vice-versa) as follows: S-DV-NH-Z-VM-BN-SB - a wide gap - MIV.

More precise and faster job now

Debates in Parliament indicate that at present Mr. Kebich and his crew have control over 2/3 of the body. The SuS on vacations, he had time to discuss details with the former general presiding and we could suppose that on re-assembly the deputies would function precisely (in the communist way) and quickly (in the police manner). Indeed, numerous laws were passed /27, 28, 29/ and some of them were analyzed and commented /30/. Leonid Zlotnikov, well-known economist has chosen exact words to comment on the Program-draft "On restructuring economy...": another stack of straw /31/.

In one of the session's sitting breaks, Mr. Bogdankevich spoke to Z reporter about the principles of selecting the RUR and BRB exchange rate. The Russian party moved many objections against equal ratio and propose more of a 6:1 ratio rather than 2:1. For the first time ever Mr. Bogdankevich complained of the humiliating position of the Belarusian party at the talks with the "elder brother" /34/.

Conclusions

A significant fact: Mr. Gryb lives in the Poulikhov Street named after Ivan Poulikhov, terrorist, who was

put to death for an attempt upon the life of the Minsk governor in 1906. In those days the governor was almost the same as today's speaker.

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5. Sergey Gaidukevich: we didn't dismiss Stanislav Shushkevich, "The Pendulum" stopped by itself, R No 35, 22.02
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11. In voluntary union only, VM No 23, 01.02
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13. There are forces able to struggle, S No 5, 8-14.02
14. Democracy in danger, Z No 26, 04.02
15. Things are bad everywhere, SB No 22, 01.02
16. Trade Union Presidium insists on new elections, BCh No 6, 07.02
17. The king is naked, R No 20, 02.02
18. Who likes the 3rd force? DV No 37, 23.02
19. Gennady Karpenko: people's faith is the main thing, SB No 28, 08.02
20. On protecting consumers' rights, NH No 21, 01.02
21. On state tax inspection of the RB, R No 38, 24.02
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23. Old problems and new tendencies, BR No 7, 9-15.02
24. Another stack of straw, BR No 6, 02-08.02
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Something more for you to read

Economy

Brest proving ground of capitalism (small privatization), BR No 7, 9-15.02

Does Belarus need free economic zones? NEH No 5, 02.02

Ivan Antonovich: government keeps situation under control and guarantees sovereignty, Z No 40-41, 26.02

Conversion

Changing swords for ploughs: Belarusian picture, NEH No 5, 02.02

Unification of monetary systems

Unification is a drug causing excessive expectations and illusions. Chock will follow (exclusive interview by Y. Gaidar), BDG No 4, 31.01

National currency is not an ob-

stacle to international cooperation, NH No 23, 03.02

More pluses than minuses, BN No 28, 15.02

Long way to rouble zone, NH No 31, 15.02

Future elections

Is presidentialism suitable for Belarus, NH No 32, 16.02

Electing deputies we elect our fate, NH No 37, 23.02

Banking

The man who is trusted with millions (On Savings Bank today), NH No 20, 29-31.01

Evgeny Kravtsov: legislation does not stimulate banking market, Z No 33, 16.02

Investment funds

Waiting for the voucher, SB No 25, 04.02

In order not to search wind in the field, VM No 40, 23.02

Belarus resources

Such a soft, delicate "Gold", R No 36-37, 23.02

Mr. Baryshevsky after "Slava" (science in Belarus), F No 7, 21-27.02

Deposits of Flint in Belarus, VM No 34, 15.02

Agriculture

1.2 trillion roubles credit to sow, VM No 30, 12-14.02

On additional measures to support agricultural complex, R No 35, 22.02

Finance and investments

Hard currency regulation in 1994, NEH No 7, 16-22.02

Investment activities: sources of action and guarantees of effect, NEH No 7, 16-22.02

Abbreviations

PBC - Party of Belarusian Communists
MDSPJ - Movement for Democracy, Social Progress and Justice
BCSP - Belarusian Congress of Science and Production
APB - Agrarian Party of Belarus
BPF - Belarusian Popular Front
UDPB - United Democratic Party of Belarus
BZV - Belarusian Zgortavanne Vaiskovsane (Union of Soldiers)
BSDH - Belarusian Social and Democratic Hromada
BChDU - Belarusian Christian and Democratic Union
FTU - Federation of Trade-Unions
SBL - Society of the Belarusian Language
FPB - Peasants' Party of Belarus
NDPB - National and Democratic Party of Belarus
PAP - People's Accord Party
NH - Narodnaya Hazeta
SB - Sovetskaya Belorussia
S - Svoboda
DV - Dobry Vechar
Z - Zvyazda
VM - Vecherny Minsk
BN - Belorusskaya Nyra
MIV - My I Vremya (We and Time)
MP - Minskaya Pravda
F - Femida
R - Respublika
BCh - Belorussky Chas
NEH - Natsyjanalnaya Ekanamichnaya Hazeta
BR - Belorussky Rynok
BDG - Belorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta

(Abridged, full text is available from MEN).

Banks are growing richer



According to **Anatoly DROZDOV**, banking business in Belarus is not only among the most prospective but also doing almost well.

The past year of 1993 has resolutely manifested a gradual and promising growth of the bank business in Belarus. The factors will speak for themselves. The number of banks has gone up from 25 as of Jan 1, 1993 to 29 as of Jan 1, 1994. The first ever foreign bank subsidiary (INKO Ukrainian office with the authorized fund of \$0.5 mln) embarked upon its activities in Minsk. The Belarusian capital also became the seat for the representative bodies of three foreign banks: KOMMERZBANK of Germany, DEPOSIT AND CREDIT BANK of Poland and MOSBUSINESSBANK of Russia. This year they are planning to retool themselves into bank branches and carry out bank operations. To-date one bank in Belarus accounts for 3,400 residents (bank branches included) which is very close to the same factor in the developed European countries. Regrettably, the service level of the Belarusian banks is still a long way from the European one.

After having analyzed the authorized fund growth of the biggest banks (the ones that were set up again excluded), it will turn out that it has increased by 13.25 times on average over the last year. This basically coincides with the growth dynamics of the US dollar - Belarusian rouble exchange rate from BRB 528 up to BRB 6,980 for \$1 over the same period of time. In other words, regardless of a high income tax of 44% as well as some other direct and indirect taxes and the activities environment which hasn't proved to be quite favourable the Belarusian banks have managed to keep their savings away from the inflation impact and simultaneously pay good dividends to their shareholders. However, the final dividends for 1993 will be decided by the shareholders' meetings which are slated for February-March. But even today it is plain to see that most of the banks have annual dividends on rouble stocks to the tune of 300%.

In 1993 none of the Belarusian banks went bankrupt though at least one of them BELAGROPROMBANK drew close to this point. The reason is that this bank extended credits to the collective farms which were not able to

repay them and the government doesn't seem to be willing to reimburse the debts.

The relations between commercial banks, the National bank and the state became contradictory on the one hand as the amendments to the bank legislation took effect. They make the commercial banks rigidly dependent upon the National bank, but on the other hand, the National bank lost twice in connection with suits filed by the commercial banks to the high administrative court of the RB. In autumn 1993 the parliament and government virtually encroached on the funds of the commercial banks share holders. They obliged the latter to grant credits to collective farms and state-run enterprises. Hard currency speculations became one of the profit sources for the commercial banks last year. With the inflation being on the rise, hard currency investments are a non-risk option for generating proceeds. It is quite obvious that many banks availed themselves of this opportunity. The inflation compelled the banks to acquire the knack of using short money, i.e. short-term credits and deposits. It is possible now to obtain even a three-day deposit certificate with high interest rates in Minsk. One year ago it was out of the question - even two-week credits made the banks suspicious.

The Belarusian banks' success last year accounts for the fact that nowadays it is the most marketable sphere of the country's economy. This is the focus of private capital which draws the most qualified specialists who have studied and trained abroad. The legislation is very progressive in this sphere too. The only thing which the Belarusian banks cannot do is work with the public. This is why pro-communist politicians and mass media have succeeded in moulding a negative banker's image in the public eye, the image of a swindler who is seeking to cash in on the poverty of the nation. And this is where lurks one of the potential threats to future bank business in the RB.

The authorized fund growth of 10 biggest commercial banks in Belarus last year (in mln BRB)

Bank	01.01.94	01.01.93	Times
BELAGROPROMBANK	21984.8	827	26.8
BELPROMSTROBANK	12478.5	1358	9.2
BELARUS	10410.2	932	11.2
BELBUSINESSBANK	8305.4	852	9.7
PRIORBANK	8907.9	1025	8.7
DRUKAT	3518.2	188	18.6
BRESTCOMBANK	2442.2	100	24.4
VITCOMBANK	1737.8	165	10.5
BELVNESHECONOMBANK	1686.9	388	4.2
POISK	1670.7	150	11.1

Gains dim, evils evident

By Alexander BURDA

Continued from page 1

All the observers have unanimously agreed that a rouble zone uncertainty has caused the Belarusian economy more damage than the elusive unification advantages. This had an impact on the February hard currency sales at the Inter Bank Exchange of Money.

In January the dollar and DM remained almost static with a 3-5% growth a month and the fluctuations up to 5-6% of the average monthly rate. But then starting the second week in February the hard currencies went up fast. Within 9 days in the mid-month (from February 8 till February 17) the dollar increased by 13.5% almost three times as much as during the preceding month and a half. The DM spiraled upwards by 14.6% reflecting as usual the dollar tendency to a larger extent because of a small sales volume which is on average 6.5-fold less than that of the

USD. The RUR has gained the same 14.6%.

The last factor, probably, became the reason of a total currency take-off. The point is that under Enactment No. 56 of February 4, 1994 the CoM withdrew non-cash RUR from the Belarusian administrative subject. True, they were off-set in the "rabbits" according to the National Bank exchange rate. This decision was justified by a RUR shortage to pay the Russian "GAZ-PROM" Stock Company for the national gas debts. Anyway, this stepped shocked the currency market. The law-abiding directors of the state-run enterprises who did not conceal the Russian roubles from the dear Government abroad were bereft of the roubles in a blink of an eye, whereas the currency market forfeited on the chief supply source. That is why the RURs were sold on a mass scale at the tenders with the exchange rate going up. It is noteworthy that the hard currencies

were panic-stricken too (one can expect everything from our Government). This augmented the volume of tenders and slightly reduced the rate. However, following February 8 the RUR supply dropped by more than twice. At the present the RURs are eagerly bought up and sometimes more than it is expected. This difference is made by the National Bank forced rouble intervention.

So, this time "a trigger" was the increase of the RUR exchange rate rather than the usual USD growth. It is quite natural that everything is happening against the backdrop of inflation which officially amounted to 40.7% in January and did not scale down in February. It looks as if the indifference towards its own financial system which has always been notable for the Belarusian administration has reached the climax now. Will the unification write everything off?

Such a tumultuous market animation has made one event unnoticeable. If it were a quiet country living at a quiet time this event would definitely draws intent attention. In early February the

most mighty banks and financial companies of the RB founded an Inter Bank Union in addition to the Association of Commercial Banks which had been set up a while ago. Unlike the flabby association the fledgling union is a tightly united structure having a manifest objective. According to the unofficial information this objective is to regulate the rate at the Inter Bank Exchange for the best benefit of the Union's interest. If it is the case then the newly-born bank super-monster and monopolist will be able to "crush down" not only medium- and small-sized commercial banks but the National Bank of Belarus as well. In the more civilized countries the state responds to such a threat promptly and unequivocally. In this country the National Bank apprehending the intervention of the Russian bank capital as soon as the monetary unification takes effect has sanctioned an unprecedented monopoly cartel. Are there any guarantees that the Belarusian Frankenstein will not turn his back on his maker?

Legal chronicle



Agriculture, science and industry are fast asleep whilst the law-makers are doing their business. Alexander PLASKOVITSKY gives a detailed report on the January legislative proceedings.

On January 18 The SuS introduced some slight corrections into the economic laws and consolidated the posture of the state as an owner and the government as its representative.

The Enactment of January 18 grants the permission to issue licenses to private notaries all over the Republic until the law on notariate has been adopted. The number of licenses is to be decided by the CoM. Another Enactment of the same day introduced voluntary deductions to be made by the private entrepreneurs to the State Employment Assistance Fund. They will make up 1% from the personal income.

CoME (Enactment of the Council of Ministers) No. 6 of January 10 authorizes the interior ministry to make and issue common foreign passports for travel abroad starting January 1.

CoME No. 8 of January 12 repeals an import duty on the commodities which codes are 871639300, 871690.

Under CoME No. 11 of January 14 a list of towns was drawn where the land is not to be privatized owing to the valuable natural resources.

CoME No. 12 of January 14 approves of the agreement on the cooperation with the U.S. Customs.

CoME No. 13 of January 14 provides that starting January 1 the state will be purchasing farm produce at unrestricted prices. The government asks the National bank to rescue the decision on licensing and ban opening bank accounts abroad from February 15 in order to pay for energy supplies.

CoME No. 15 of January 17 defines major dimensions of the economic development in the country.

CoME No. 18 of January 14 sets the travelling subsistence

per diem rates as follows: 12% of the minimal salary for Republic-wide business trips, 15% paid out in Russian roubles with the exchange rate 1:1 for C.I.S. visits and not less than 5% for lodging expenses.

CoME No. 28 of January 21 concerns the agreement signed with Great Britain on education cooperation.

CoME No. 30 of January 25 introduces a list of commodities exported to Russia which are liable to duties.

CoME No. 36 provides for a toll to be paid for the use of the Belarusian stretch of Brest-Moscow highway. This is required by the road modernization.

Under CoME No. 41 starting February 10 the Securities State Inspection is entitled to impose penalties:

- on the emittents who do not submit the papers in time to get securities registered, issue them without registration, sell the securities openly without having provided a press report, beat the deadline of an open subscription, cover up the changes referring the securities value and do not file an emittent's report - up to 20 minimal salaries and up to 15 minimal salaries in the reports accounting for stock operations in the amount of above 5% are not submitted;

- on the investment funds if they expend more than 5% of their property or obtain more than 10% of the securities while dealing with the same emittent - up to 20 minimal salaries;

- on the banks which have made transactions at the stock exchange at the expense of their depositors or the securities of the emittents who are served by these banks - up to 20 minimal salaries;

- on the brokers, stock exchanges and emittents that default on the breach elimination requirements set by the

inspection - up to 25 minimal salaries.

The decision on the penalty can be taken within two months after the violation has been spotted and within one year after it has occurred. However, the penalty may come into effect or be taken to the administrative court within two weeks. The market trade regulations had been approved by the Trade Ministry back on October 14 but they were not effective until January 1. These regulations role out the trade set up at inappropriate places as well as the trade in goods of bad quality and without license. The regulations must provide sellers and buyers with the market services. It is banned to collect admission fees for entering a trade market. However, this provision is disregarded.

Under the Decree of December 3, 1993 the State Customs Committee introduced a declaration procedure which took effect on December 15 for all the commodities of a trade turnover with the former Soviet republics. This procedure applies to the customs conditions of export shipments and free circulation as well as on products within the same framework and that of active and passive improvement. The same decree envisages export-import duties and fees for customs formalities.

Under State Labor Committee Enactment No. 90 of December 6, 1993 in agreement with the Finance Ministry, Foreign Ministry and the State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations "The Labor Regulations for the Belarusian Nationals Working Abroad" were adopted. They came into force on December 1, 1993.

The relations between the administrative subject and the person sent abroad are regulated by a contract which must specify the living conditions and salaries. After the allocation a decree is passed. The person is paid off at his former place of work. A single allowance is given unless the term abroad exceeds one year. In case of permanent work, 80 kg of luggage for one person are covered, 240 kg for a family. If it is a training course

or studies then this weight norm makes 30 kg. Combined options are available as an exception. Salaries are paid once or twice a month. Additional 25% with a 6-hour working day are paid for hot and humid climate conditions. Days-off are taken the way it is done in the Republic or heading from the local traditions. A vacation time depends on the place and working conditions. However, if a shorter vacation in comparison to a regular one is articulated in the contract or international agreement then the remainder can be taken at the home country. Vacation travelling fares are reimbursed once a year and can be combined with business trips. The work damage done abroad is to be compensated by the employer. Illnesses must be certified by the Belarusian medical institutions abroad. In case the employee is disabled for 4 months he must be repatriated. The seniority is not suspended if the temporarily disabled person can get a job within 2 months after he has been sent back home.

An invitation sent by a foreign partner can serve the basis for a foreign business trip. The persons going on a business trip abroad must be registered in a special job. They are assigned a technical task which includes the purpose, time framework, plan and subject of possible contracts. If a business trip term exceeds 60 days, the salary at the place of work is decreased by 50% and a foreign on-business subsistence is paid. Hard currency expenses are never reimbursed in roubles for those travelling. Those using a car are repaid for car expenses. There is a set of rates for reimbursing costs. Non-state companies may increase the rates provided the appropriate regulations are available. These regulations should be approved by the company's highest body. Consequently, the income in excess is liable to taxes. The amounts within the established rates are related to the production costs whereas the amounts above the norm are made at the income expense. The subsistence can be reduced because of free board and lodging. A business-trip report is to be submitted within a two-week's time.

The salaries are done on the following basis: the stay on foreign soil is paid in the local currency. The payments are made on producing time-sheets.

In mid-December the State

Atomic Inspection established a procedure for taking radioactive substances across the border. A special certificate is to be issued by the Chairman or Deputy Chairman of the Inspection.

On December 20 the Securities State Inspection adopted a registration procedure for emitting the shares of open stock companies set up in the course of privatization. The following papers: an application, notary certified copies of the emission decision and the charter, 2 copies of an emission prospectus and brief information on the emission, a format-checke and a business-plan, should be submitted for registration within one month after the company has been registered. The term of registration is 30 days. The registration is free of charge after 6 months have expired. A report on stock dissemination must be submitted to the Inspection.

On December 29 the State Labour Committee (Enactment No. 97) introduced some corrections to the calculation of the average salary.

On the new year's eve the State Property Committee passed a bill on the shut-out of incomplete construction sites. To do this, an owner must get in a notification describing the object and the reason for the shut-out, a statement from the decision on this action and price estimates. The local body of the State Property Committee makes a decision within a week's time and in a fortnight the State Committee itself either grants the permission or turns down the request. Bill No. 256 of January 6 envisages the regulations on clearing operations in the RB. These Regulations were initially drawn by the National Bank Board on December 29, 1993 and have 13 appendices approved on different dates. The Regulations constitute 269 lengthy provisions and "Bank Bulletin" No. 1 of 1994 carries all the details. The key principles are: top priority of state payments, writing off the funds without a holder's order can only be done in the cases stipulated by the legislation (a writ of execution, court orders, Tax Inspection Decrees, notary's execution orders and requirements certified by the trade unions), complaints and lawsuits do not suspend account operations, papers can be submitted during the whole working day.

Payments can be made in payment and request guarantees, cheques, letters of credit, bills and collection orders. The payments can be modified by banks and mutual requirements may be taken into consideration.

Payment papers must be standard-sized and have an indication of a name, number, date, the name and number of payer and receiver's bank as well as a bank account number and a payment code (this doesn't apply to the cheques of Defense Ministry, Interior Ministry and KGB). Amounts should be written in words. The first copy is to be sealed and signed. Ink and eraser corrections shouldn't be tolerated.

A payment guarantee

order is good for one bank throughout the duration of 10 days. 3 copies are needed for one bank and 4 for several banks or the banks in different towns.

Enterprises can readily transfer remuneration (with no limits) to the workers' accounts through post offices.

A cheque book is valid for 1 year. Its holder is entitled to grant a single power of attorney for a cheque to any citizen of the Republic. While paying by cheque it is permissible to make an additional payment in the amount of 20% of a buy value and to give back the change up to 5%.

The regulations provide for payments made in separate branches and detail a bill turnover.

Should the expiration of a time limit for the payments within the former USSR occur, 0.5% fine a day is charged. On January 25 the Finance Ministry set per diem subsistence (\$20-\$50) and limit accommodation rates (\$40-\$130 in cities like New York) for those who go on business abroad. The Finance Ministry also passed new methodical instructions on tax collection.

On January 27 the Customs Committee and the Finance Ministry registered the Regulations on the commission fees for customs formalities on the commodities carried by companies and individuals. They set the rate as 3 minimal salaries for one batch of goods. The customs formalities would be free for transportation only for privileged clients and batches worth less than 10 minimal salaries.

On December 30 the City Executive Committee passed Bill No. 755 and established in Minsk:

- a single rental rate for production premises BRB 9,000 per 1 sq. m (an exception was made for foreign representative bodies which still have March hard currency rates). The discounts are provided for basements (warehouses excluded) - 25%, semi-basements (warehouses excluded) if neither sewerage and running water facilities nor central heating is available - 10%. The District Executive Committees have the right to put up the rates at convenient places and the lessee is responsible for numerous taxes and expenses incurred by running the premises;

- a rental for dormitory living rooms as a flat rent.

Sublease is only possible in case a lessee's written permission is available.

The City Council at its 13th session:

- has decided to lease municipal facilities only after the Executive Committee has passed the decision and touched base with the deputies' commissions;

- has divided up the latitude between itself and the Executive Committee in connection with plots or land. The Executive Committee will deal with land lease for foreigners. It is also authorized to develop draft regulations on providing foreign investors with plots of land to do the construction.

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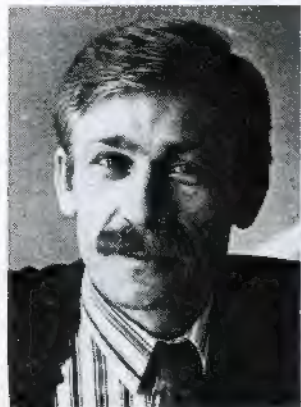
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Sport, beauty and strike

Our photographer, Sergey Grits, is sure that the heroes of the month should appear in MEN. So, please meet MEN February Selection. Sportsmen and scientists, "left" and "right", conservative and epathetic, have been gathered below



Mr. Alexander Sychoy has been appointed Envoy Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the RB to the United Nations. He hails from Gomel. Alexander Sychoy graduated Moscow Exterior Relations Institute. He worked at the Foreign Ministry for 15 years. Sychoy walked up the diplomatic career ladder from an attache to a Deputy Minister. He also worked at the Permanent Mission of Belarus to the UN branch and other international organizations in Geneva.



Mr. Igor Germenchuk, 33, Popular Front's SuS Deputy, SVABODA independent weekly's Editor-in-Chief. The paper is in tough opposition to the ruling regime and stands trials with the authorities. Latest suit to SVABODA worth BRB 15 mln was won by Mr. Myacheslav Gryb. The paper issue due on February 15 was one day suspended.



Miss Marina Vasiltsova, a 17-year old student, has won the first ever "Supermodel-94" beauty contest in Belarus. Apart from studies Marina works as a model for Sasha Varlamov advertising agency. After winning the pageant contest it looks like her dream - to gain independence - may come true: in two months Marina leaves for Swiss to start work under her first overseas contract.

Mr. Sergey Antonchik, 38, SuS Deputy, Republic's Striking Committee Vice-Chairman, worker at the BEL-VAR Production Amalgamation.

Under his membership in the temporary anti-corruption commission Sergey Antonchik has a clear opinion of the demoralization level of the highest-rank government bureaucrats. At present the SuS majority are trying to deprive him the deputy's immunity for holding an unsanctioned meeting.



Mr. Igor Zhelezovsky has been in speed-skating for 15 years. He is a 6-time champion of the world. Igor was real eager to finally win the Olympic gold medal. Alas, he did not succeed in doing so. But his silver medal is a present for us all.

Mr. Nikolai Pinigin is a theatre producer. He has been working fruitfully with the Belarusian drama. His last work is "Idyll" performance by V. Dunin-Martynkevich, the last century pastorals. The producer has staged an astonishing performance in conjunction with the Belarusian National Theatre Group in Minsk. The performance has preserved both the original version and the style of the latter-day "total" theatre.



By Roman YAKOVLEVSKY

Mr. Myacheslav Gryb and **Mr. Mikhail Marinich** were the main candidates to become the speaker of the Belarusian Parliament at the recent January elections. According to the returns of the second voting stage Mr. Marinich, the First Deputy of the State Committee for Foreign Economic Relations, yielded to his rival. The resignation of the present Government is one of the requirements put forward by the Popular Front of Belarus. Many of us were taken by surprise on hearing the opposition put up deputy Marinich for the premier of the People's Accord Coalition Government.

Mikhail Afanassievich Marinich was born under the constellation sign of Capricorn on January 13, 1940 in Polesye region. After a village secondary school he entered Gomel Railway Engineer Institute. Then Marinich continued his education in Minsk where he graduated from the Polytechnical Institute and was granted a qualification of construction-engineer. He worked his way from a foreman up to a director of the construction administrative department during 10 years. In early 70-s he supervised versatile construction units and worked in Afghanistan for 3 years. When he came back he made up his mind to enroll as a student of Minsk State Teachers' Training Institute for Foreign Languages. On graduation from the English Department Marinich was offered work at the Soviet Embassies in Cuba and Canada.

However, as **Mikhail Marinich** puts it, the party bodies insisted on his career prospects volte-face. He was directed to work at the Soviet power institutions. In late 70-s Marinich headed Minsk district and then Minsk City Executive Committee. At the 1990 elections he ran simultaneously for the city and state parliament. The attempts were made not to recognize his mandate as a City Council Deputy. Marinich was

accused of electoral malpractice.

At that time it was expedient that the heads of executive and legislative be combined in one person. A mandate recognition delay as per Marinich prevented him from becoming a mayor of Minsk. Some time later the SuS of Belarus overrode the charges and recognized the mandate.

So, **Mikhail Marinich** is one of a few members of the SuS who has been elected a People's Deputy twice.

Marinich's posture on the monetary union is very close to that of **Mr. Stanislav Bogdankevich**, the head of the National Bank. In other words, his attitude is restrained and optimistic. He doesn't believe that such a unification must be followed by a political annexation to Russia.

Mikhail Marinich thinks that his life creed is "providing people with legal succour". The books written by **Yury Bondarev** are a great favourite of his. As far as favourite drinks are concerned, he prefers "Stolichnaya" vodka on any occasions and receptions. Marinich also likes the colour blue most of all.

On Sundays, he has played football and basketball with the same company of people for the past 15 years. Marinich is fond of swimming. In his opinion, this is what they call a hobby.

Mikhail Marinich has a wife and two sons. Everybody in his family is a construction-engineer by specialization. Marinich's chances as a politician are rated quite high for the future developments at the political Olympus. Both the ruling parliamentary majority and the opposition treat him with a favourable respect. This gives a striking illustration of his future career. 51 deputies upheld Marinich when votes were cast at the recent speaker elections. However, the opposition did not participate in the voting.

March-April Exhibitions in Minsk

Date	Topics	Place	Phone
Mar 14-18	Sweet and Bitter (food products)	Belgospromekt*	664333
Mar 15-18	IE Medicine and Pharmacology	REC**	347226
Mar 16-18	7th IE East-West-North-South	Minskexpo***	273085
Mar 30-Apr 2	8th IF Minsky Kirmash: Spring-94	Minskexpo, REC	546134
Apr 6-9	2nd IE Advertisement-Publishing Systems-Operative Printing	REC	264689
Apr 12-16	Auto-2000	REC	347226
Apr 12-16	Mercury-94	Belgospromekt	664333
Apr 18-22	IE Communtchnika-94	Minskexpo	269193
Apr 20-23	Eastern Sale Spring-94	REC	457278

Abbreviations used:

IE - International Exhibition
REC - Republic's Exhibition Centre
TCC - Technical and Commerce Centre
IF - International Fair

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* 23 Masharov Ave
** 27 Yanka Koupala Str
*** 14 Masharov Ave



The British Council has been in active operation in Minsk for six months already establishing an English language teachers' Resource Centre, giving lectures, shows, British film demonstrations, etc. Their close special and spiritual affinity to MEN made this interview with the Coordinator of the British Council in Belarus Simon Ingram-Hill inevitable.

What is the main task of the British Council?

To promote British cultural cooperation overseas. It's Britain's main non-governmental organization, and it is recognized abroad as the major body for the promotion of British culture and British education.

Let's speak more about your priorities here, in Belarus.

They lie, first of all, in the area of English language teaching and those who are involved in British studies. We also manage projects on behalf of the British Embassy, particularly selection of people

Simon Ingram-Hill: I don't feel that the English language belongs to England only

going to Britain to do studies there. And besides, we work in such areas as educational and human resource management, medical welfare. We also give people opportunities to travel and so we are promoting professional contacts. We assist in putting similar institutions in both countries with each other in touch.

How do you estimate the results of your half-year's work here?

I can say that we have achieved certain objectives easily; our Resource Centre has got 700 members, and there are many more who want to join. We are running a number of inservice programmes for English teachers. Two months ago we had an exhibition Forty years of British sculpture.

What is the average

level of knowledge of English here in comparison with other countries?

Many people here have excellent English, but due to lack of contacts it is of a superficial character. Whereas in Europe there has been a long-term appreciation of the need for English. Belarus is only recently recognizing the value of English for international purposes, for example, for business contexts. I don't feel that the English language belongs to England only.

What problems do you encounter here?

It is a bit easier for me as I'm not a commercial person. That may be why I haven't experienced any artificial barriers. I should say though, there is a kind of conservatism here. It'd be nice to see more initiatives coming

from the people here, more suggestions.

Do you think that things move here or the country is already dead?

No, I don't think things are dead. It's important to be optimistic here. I could hardly regard myself as psychologist of Belarus, but I see that though there may be difficulties with the economy. It is very good that people have time to think about change.

What are your immediate plans?

I'd like to have a broader reach, I mean outside Minsk, in the regions. This year we will send between 5 - 10 teachers for long-term (for more than 3 months) study. In summer we shall send more to the British Council summer schools. In March we will be running seminars on business

English. We hope to have a major conference for Belarusian teachers in Autumn.

What will you do in case some other specialists, not teachers, industrialists, for instance, address you for help?

Feasibility studies are the usual preliminary work for such contacts. We try to be helpful for all those in our priority groups. Minsk Economic News readers included!

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Three stars of paradise

By Galina KHARTON

Minsk hotels have always been bad. Our state leaders had to put up with residencies and remote cottages as the mobs of people coveting to procure a sleeping place gave rise to euphoria and rough service manners. Unobtrusive hotel services became legends and anecdotes.

Almost nothing has changed over the last few years. The skyrocketing prices and new possibilities of "renting digs" have inevitably affected the prestige of the city. The Minsk image as a centre of technical and creative intelligentsia has plummeted down. These developments have eliminated the queues in the lobbies but still the hotels get little to nothing from the hefty profits including hard currency earnings for the administration to introduce new amenities. Instead, these proceeds are "gobbled" by the state and hotel privatization is still an unheard-of concept. Hence it follows there are no stars on the hotel pediments. None of the hotels has an advertising prospectus. Our hotels can be arbitrarily placed on the same footing with three-star hotels provided you stay in a suite or a semi-suite. The rest of the hotels simply defy any classification. We will tell you briefly about the hotels mentioned where one still would not be ashamed to accommodate a foreign friend.

YUBILEYNAYA Hotel

The oldest Minsk hotel for foreigners is YUBILEYNAYA which is the firstling of the Intourist office. It has been around for 25 years. Incidentally, the furniture in its rooms

is about the same age. Many generations of cockroaches have remained almost untroubled in the closets. One of the few merits of the hotel is its location. It is within easy reach from the downtown. The place is abundant in public transport which is available straight by the doorsteps. The service bureau for foreigners is open from 8.00 a.m. till 8.00 p.m. One can order a car, an interpreter or obtain tickets here (tel. 26-98-35). They will answer you in many languages round-the-clock at 26-90-24 and 26-90-25.

The hotel has burgeoned with bars, cafes and stores. The annex BELINTOURIST building has a train and airplane ticket office and a conference hall which is the best in town. The latter is fitted with the equipment for instantaneous translation. A special agent can do your laundry and take it to the dry cleaner's. However, they will not take food up to your room since some bad incidents have happened in the hotel.

Most of the 200 hotel rooms are modest singles and doubles (19 sq. m) with combined lavatory and bathroom. The daily rate is quite high - \$63 for a double and \$53 for a single. The rooms have a colour TV (8 programmes including a satellite channel) and a telephone which is on an international line. In the lobby there is a bureau for BELCEL satellite communication. A modest suite in the YUBILEYNAYA hotel contains two rooms (30 sq. m), combined lavatory and bathroom and no bidet. Thus, one may ask quite a natural question: what is it you have to

pay \$95 a day for? Besides, you make an additional payment for solarium and sauna (tel. 26-90-80). The hotel has a spacious restaurant (tel. 26-90-34) with banquet halls. The cuisine is Belarusian which was once praised by Mr. Brezhnev and also European.

The competition coming from more modern and newer hotels has done damage to the popularity rating of Yubileynaya hotel. "There are only our guests from the Caucasus in the hotel now", said the administrator. The third and fourth floors are occupied by offices. In the backyard there is a reliable parking lot which requires payment. Anyway, it is dangerous to park a car in front of the hotel as the police here are "expertly" at work. They take off license plates and hold them for ransom.

As far as the latest civilization gimmicks go, there are only fruit game machines, a casino and no drugstore.

PLANETA Hotel

The PLANETA hotel takes a favourable stand on the hill right behind the YUBILEYNAYA hotel. The breathing air is very fresh here (especially at the top of a 12-storey building) and the reception service is just amiable. You may pick up a BELCEL portable phone and a bunch of wonderful roses and then drop by the barber's, news agent, beauty parlour, rouble and hard currency shops which are located right on the ground floor. There is also an exchange bureau, a drugstore, a sauna and a solarium (for those who sojourn at the hotel). The hotel has bars and a restaurant to boot. The restaurant consists of 3 large and 2 small halls but it is not as beautiful as that in the YUBILEYNAYA hotel. At

the same time dinner can be served directly to your room.

The hotel is fitted with high speed lifts. On each floor there is a hall smothered in flowers. The chambermaids have grown real tropical thickets of indoor plants.

A 3-room suite (50 sq. m) has a lavatory and a bathroom separately. It also enjoys a bidet, the face of civilization, a telephone, carpets, and satellite TV. Such a room will cost you \$116 a day. A semi-suite has 2 rooms (30 sq. m), combined cans, carpets and pictures on the wall.

Regular singles and doubles are 1 sq. m larger than those of YUBILEYNAYA hotel while having the same conveniences and rates: \$53 and \$63 respectively.

On the 6th floor (room N 600, tel. 26-72-61) there is a business centre where one can have business cards made from 8.00 a.m. till 9.00 p.m. the reception desk can be reached at 26-78-53, a doorman - 23-85-87, information - 23-84-16, fax - 26-77-80.

A parking lot is located behind and in front of the hotel but the price difference is huge. Obviously, it has to do with a view of your own motorcar. By the way, a couple of words about views. They are magnificent from the top windows: city lights with no noise on the one side and "Minsk hero-city" obelisk on the other. A little bit further there is a lake with frogs croaking and still further a piece of the old town - the trinity suburb. An exhibition hall which is right underneath looks like a tortoise with the figured shell. You can also see a pill-box next to the hotel which has withstood the test of the war and time. Masherov avenue runs like a black band.

BELARUS Hotel

Now we will go on to BELARUS hotel which resembles an open light leather index notebook put upright behind a river maze. This 22-storey building is the highest and most comfortable hotel in Minsk. It is not accidental that many embassies and diplomatic representative bodies have chosen BELARUS hotel as a temporary address but some of them have been residing there permanently. The hotel wields 6 high speed lifts and 4 fire-hose outlets. The ground floor is lined with marble and houses all the necessary service departments as well as a 200-seat conference and theatre hall which has the booths for simultaneous translation available in 4 foreign languages. However, the hall is not equipped with on-spot facilities.

Regrettably, there are fruit machines which make an awful noise and attract dubious characters. A 56-seat grill-bar teems with tough faces. This place is far from being a safe one. The security guards are not asleep in order to live up to the diplomatic status of the hotel. Here one can try fabulous sandwiches, wonderful fried chicken redolent of tantalizing aroma, soft drinks and coffee served in tiny cups. A 120-seat cafe is right nearby. The walls are covered by national carpets. The band plays there in a soft shade. The cuisine is, predominantly, Belarusian. In the basement of the hotel there is a wood-lined sauna with a large hall. After recent redecoration of the sauna soft: armchairs, a TV set and a national ceramics panel from the floor to the ceiling have been installed there making the sauna the most beautiful

place in the hotel. BELARUS is the only hotel where a shop is open round-the-clock and cozy cafes are located on floors 6, 9, 13 and 16.

The hotel was built 8 years ago and it resembles a fan from the top view. Belarus hotel towers over the city and gives an access to breathtaking views especially from the windows of panorama bar which is located on the 22nd floor. For these views you have to pay BRB 60,000 as admission fee which include starters. You can get hard drinks for additional payment. But the disco and white furniture are worth it.

Modest singles and doubles with combined lavatory and bathroom are cheaper than anywhere in town: \$30 and \$35 a day.

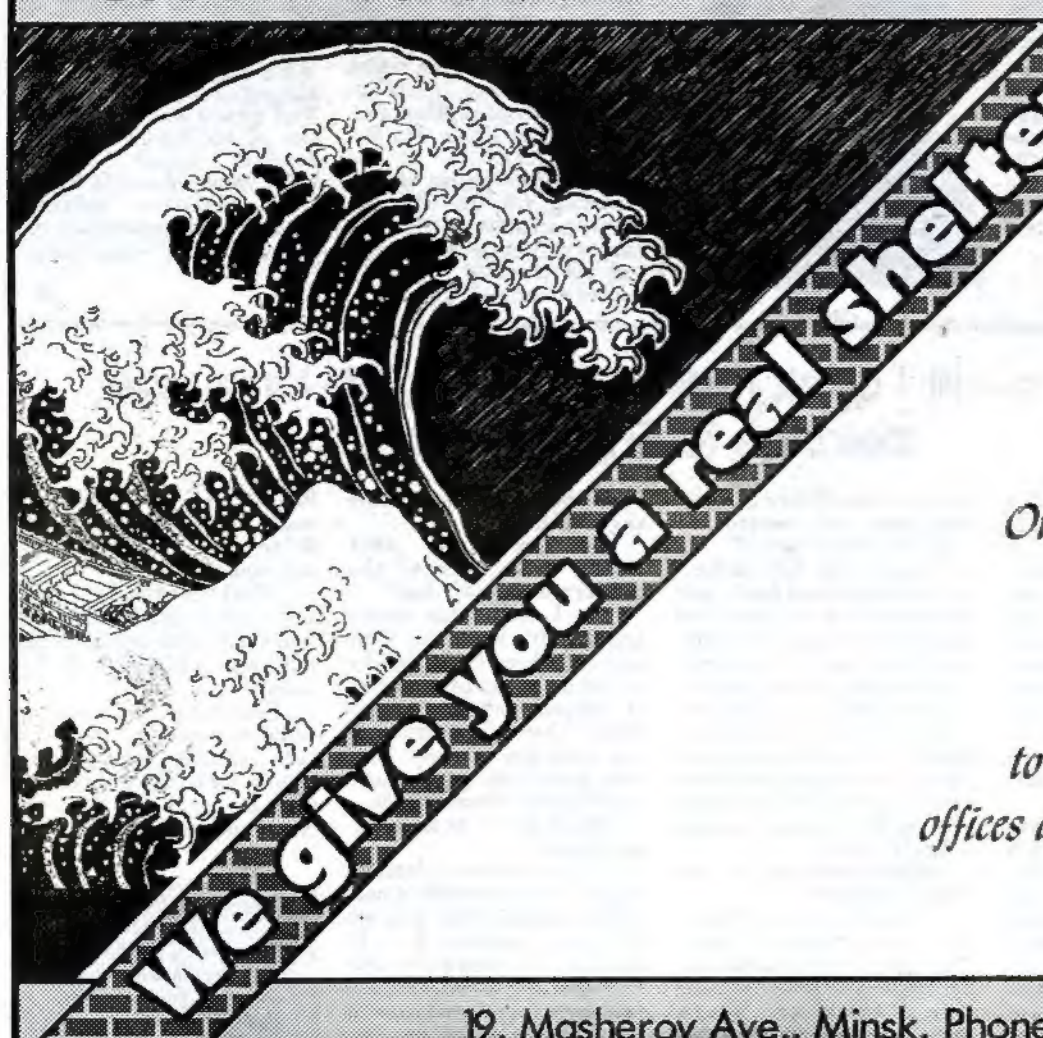
A semi-suite (34 sq. m) has two intercommunicating rooms and combined conveniences: \$50 a day. A suite looks quite luxurious (90 sq. m). It has 3 rooms, a luggage room, separate lavatory and bathroom and carpet: \$80 a day.

The second floor houses a service centre with business machinery (tel. 39-12-33), a foreigners accommodation office (tel. 39-17-05) which can give any information in many languages from 9.00 a.m. till 9 p.m., an administrator (tel. 34-82-52) and an information desk (tel. 34-74-36). Unfortunately, there is no public transport nearby, but taxi cabs which drive guests up a picturesque knoll above the river to the restored church which is next to the hotel. This is the only hotel where you can rent a car (see ads in MEN).

Minsk has at least a dozen more of hotels. But we will tell you about them next time.



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ENVIRONMENT AND MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

has been opened by UNESCO at the Sakharov Radioecology College. Its purpose is to help arrange the curriculum so the graduates would obtain authentic international education and training with diplomas recognized all over the world.



Lengthy ownership litigation between sportsmen and believers for the building in the Svoboda Square in Minsk was won by the Faith. A Catholic church recovered from Spartak gym.

THE DEFENSE MINISTRY OF BELARUS

intends to purchase BRB 128 mln worth of aluminium from the Russian Federation to die-cast emblems and label stars for a new military uniform which is going to be introduced in 1994-1995.

112 MUNICIPAL FACILITIES

owned by the Local Soviets went private in 1993 and were bought out for BRB 5 bln 689 mln. The privatization process affecting municipal facilities in different cities and regions of Belarus is not a homogeneous one. For instance, in Minsk and Brest Region 30 units have been appropriated so far whereas in Vitebsk Region there are as few as 3 facilities which have gone private.

20-HECTARE PLOT OF LAND

has been laid out by the city authorities for Akropol multi-branch enterprise. A cottage complex with public and social amenities is to be built in the vicinity of Filimonov Street and Staroborissov Highway.

MINSK CITY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

has stepped up its activities on the safety measures for non-ferrous metals and the items made of these metals as well as non-ferrous metal scrap and wastes. This is an emergency measure as the city has over 300 lifts which have been stripped off their non-ferrous tackle. Only 5 the most reliable firms are likely to be allowed to buy in non-ferrous metals. Private companies and non-state enterprises will be forbidden to do this type of business.

PROMOTION AND ADVERTISEMENT

of Energy Supplies Thrift is a topic of the seminar held within the framework of the TESIS, a programme for rendering technical aid to the C.I.S. "It is one of 20 projects of our programme", says Mr. Gunar Iversen, director of the seminar. The fulfilment of this project in Belarus gives us a chance to launch an extensive campaign aimed at informing the population about the possibilities of developing sufficient power for energy consumption needs and get providing environmental protection.

AMBASSADOR TO LITHUANIA

Mr. Evgeny Voitovich has arrived in Vilnius to start his diplomatic mission.

THE NATIONAL INCOME

of the RB totalled BRB 10.4 tri (221.5 tri for the C.I.S.), i.e. 69% (a C.I.S. average 66%) if compared to "the starting point": the year 1991. The Belarusian national income accounted for 4.7% provided the C.I.S. income is 100%. So we are somewhere in "the golden middle" in between more or less stable Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and the rest of the more unstable republics in the C.I.S.

THE HIGHWAY BREST-MINSK-RUSSIAN BORDER

is to be streamlined in compliance with the European agreement on international highways which envisions the installation of toll-gates on the turnpikes. This is a decree which has recently been passed by the government. The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development is ready to grant a credit and sponsor the project.

A HIGH-SPEED RAILWAY

is to start from Paris and stretch throughout Germany, Poland and Belarus as far as the Russian outlying reaches. The design-engineers of "Zheldorproekt", the Republican design institute have already proceeded in developing a blueprint for a 650-km length of the railway which will run across Belarus.

THE STATE SECRETARIAT

on Violence Control and National Security is to be transformed into the Board which will be co-ordinating the administrative body activities of the

Council of Ministers. Mr. Valery Pavlov has been appointed as director. Prior to this appointment he was the First Deputy State Secretary on violence control and national security. Under the same government decree the State Territorial Secretariat is to be changed into the Government Territorial Secretariat. Mr. Nikolai Nikolaev has been made Government Territorial Secretary. Mr. Gennady Danilov has been recalled from his office as State Secretary on violence and national security and has been granted a position of Government Secretary.

THE TITLE OF RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS

has been granted by a special commission of Jad va-Shem, a famous Israeli institute, to a Gomel resident Alexander Dubrovsky, a Minsk resident Wanda Skuratovich-Anishkevich, her brother Joseph and sister Boleslava.

THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT

has earmarked BRB 420 mln through its Embassy in the RB for a dam reconstruction by the village of Glinitsa, Mosyr Region.

THE BELARUSIAN FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY

held a meeting to see in the year of the wooden Dog according to the lunar calendar. This event was attended by the Chinese Ambassador to the RB Mr. Van Sinda and his wife, the Chinese Embassy staff and the representatives of the Chinese business communities and companies stationed in Belarus.

THE ISRAELI AMBASSADOR

to the RB Mr. Eliahu Valk has met with Colonel D. Shilo, director of the Exterior Relations Department of the Defense Ministry. They have touched upon a series of issues of great interest for both parties such as future military contacts, prospective assistance to be rendered by Israel in the conversion process and possibilities for Belarusian officers to become familiarized with the reserve army experience of their counterparts.

"ENTERPRISE AND SECURITY" SEMINAR

has taken place in Minsk. It was organized by the Economic Information Protection Department of the Man-

agement Academy at the Council of Ministers in conjunction with Security Electronic Ltd., an independent technical security service of Minsk.

A RISE IN TUBERCULOSIS

has been reported in Minsk Region. The Minsk Regional Executive Committee has voiced its concern that TB



After having ceased to be the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Belarus Stanislav Shushkevich has started vigorous activities as a regular deputy. Judging by his numerous meetings in the Republic, Mr. Shushkevich has undertaken active preparatory efforts for the presidential elections.

is now on the rise. 80.6% of the region's residents underwent a TB check-up in 1993. According to the statistics the morbidity rate is 33.8 sick patients per 100,000 residents with the death rate being 4.5. Myadel district has the highest ever morbidity rate - 64.3 ill patients per 100,000 residents.

BRB 9,000 PER A SQUARE METRE

of state-run leasing premises is now a single rental rate set by the session of Minsk City Executive Committee. It has also decided on a discount factor (0.15%) to be introduced for some organizations including state-budgeted institutions of the health-care system and post offices all across the Republic.

PRIVATE BUSINESS ASSEMBLY

took place in Minsk on February 12. It was initiated by the Union of Entrepreneurs of the RB with assistance of some public organizations and private companies. The forum was attended by 120 representatives of the national business elite as well as the officials.

10,000 PEOPLE WERE JAILED LAST YEAR

in this country amounting to a record number of convicts over the last 50 years. However, a fairly hefty BRB 306 bln request was submitted for a budget consideration to provide inmates with food supplies.

11 MLN TONS OF OIL IS CONSUMED

daily for heating industrial and living premises of the RB. It is common knowledge that the fuel and power consumption in this country is twice as much as that in the rest of Europe. At the same time according to the experts a 20% reduction alone within 5 years may save ECU 700 mln.

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For the first time ever Minsk has seen "Anti-Advertisement-94" the exhibition of poor quality goods. 400 items were exhibited. And not only native-made ones! The Chinese vodka, (in the photo) for instance, is out of the question for human consumption. You can barely hold it in your gloves.

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	Day of the week	Departure	Arrival	Flight No.
Minsk-Vienna	2,4,7	8.10	9.10	B2 899
Vienna-Minsk	2,4,7	10.15	13.15	B2 900
Minsk-Zurich	3,7	10.30	12.15	B2 869
Zurich-Minsk	3,7	13.15	17.00	B2 870
Minsk-Berlin	1,3,5	10.00	10.50	B2 891
Berlin-Minsk	1,3,5	11.50	14.35	B2 892
Minsk-Frankfurt	1,3	12.10	14.00	B2 893
Minsk-Frankfurt	5	11.45	13.35	B2 89
Frankfurt-Minsk	1,3	14.55	18.40	B2 894
Frankfurt-Minsk	5	14.35	18.20	B2 894
Minsk-Warsaw	2,6	12.30	12.50	B2 895
Minsk-Warsaw	3	11.00	11.20	B2 895
Warsaw-Minsk	2,6	13.50	16.10	B2 896
Warsaw-Minsk	3	12.20	14.40	B2 896
Minsk-Shannon	1,5	07.05	09.00	B2 897
Shannon-New-York	1,5	14.00	16.00	E105
New-York-Shannon	6,4	18.45	8.45	E104
Shannon-Minsk	1,5	10.30	16.00	B2 898
Minsk-Tel-Aviv	4,7	10.00	13.50	B2 1447
Tel-Aviv-Minsk	4,7	15.00	19.00	B2 1448

BELARUSIAN AIRLINES BELAVIA
phones: 006 and 250-378 and 250-231 (regular flights)
250-415 (charter flights)

PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY

Concert Hall

- Mar 11: State Chamber Choir of Belarus. Conducted by Igor Matsukhou. Taneev, Kalinnikov.
- Mar 18: State Academic Symphonic Orchestra of Belarus. Conducted by V.Dmukhovskiy (Poland), soloist A. Chebotaryova (violin). Berlioz, Brahms.
- Mar 18: Stars of Belarusian Opera. Nathalia Kostenko (soprano), Nathalia Rudneva (mezzo soprano), Marat Grygorehik (tenor), Mikhas Zhilyuk (baritone).
- Mar 27: State Academic Symphonic Orchestra of Belarus. Conducted by P.Vandzilowsky, soloist Banovets (USA). Rakhmaninov, Rubinstein.
- Mar 30: Piano music. A Starkman (Moscow). Beethoven, Brahms, Chaikovsky, Stravinsky.

Chamber Hall

- Mar 4: Piano music. Rosa Maria Koucharskaya (Spain). Music by Spanish composers.
- Mar 10: "Aleo ia" ensemble (France). Music of the Renaissance.
- Mar 15: Gennadz Zabara (clarinet), Oleg Krymer (piano). Mozart, Devien, Debussi, Laureglio, Poulenk.
- Mar 21: Chamber Chorus of Boys from the Republic's Musical Lycee. Art Director Igor Matsukhou, Shoubert, Rassini, Chesnokov, Arensky, Belarussian Cantatas.

Contact phones: 333580, 335103

BELARUS BOLSHOI

- Mar 1: Verdi, Ball Mascarade (o)
- Mar 2: Chaikovsky, Sleeping Beauty (b)
- Mar 3: Verdi, Traviata (o)
- Mar 4: Chaikovsky, Nut Cracker (b)
- Mar 6: Puccini, Tosca (o)
- Mar 10: Chaikovsky, Evgeny Onegin (o)
- Mar 19: First night: Shostakovich, Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk Uezd (Katherina Izmailova) (o)
- Mar 20: Same
- Mar 22: Night of old romance
- Mar 25: Mozart, Wedding of Figaro (o)
- Mar 26: Puccini, Tosca
- Mar 27: Bassini, Seville Hairdresser (o)
- Mar 29: Same
- Mar 31: Puccini, Chio-Chio-San (o)

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